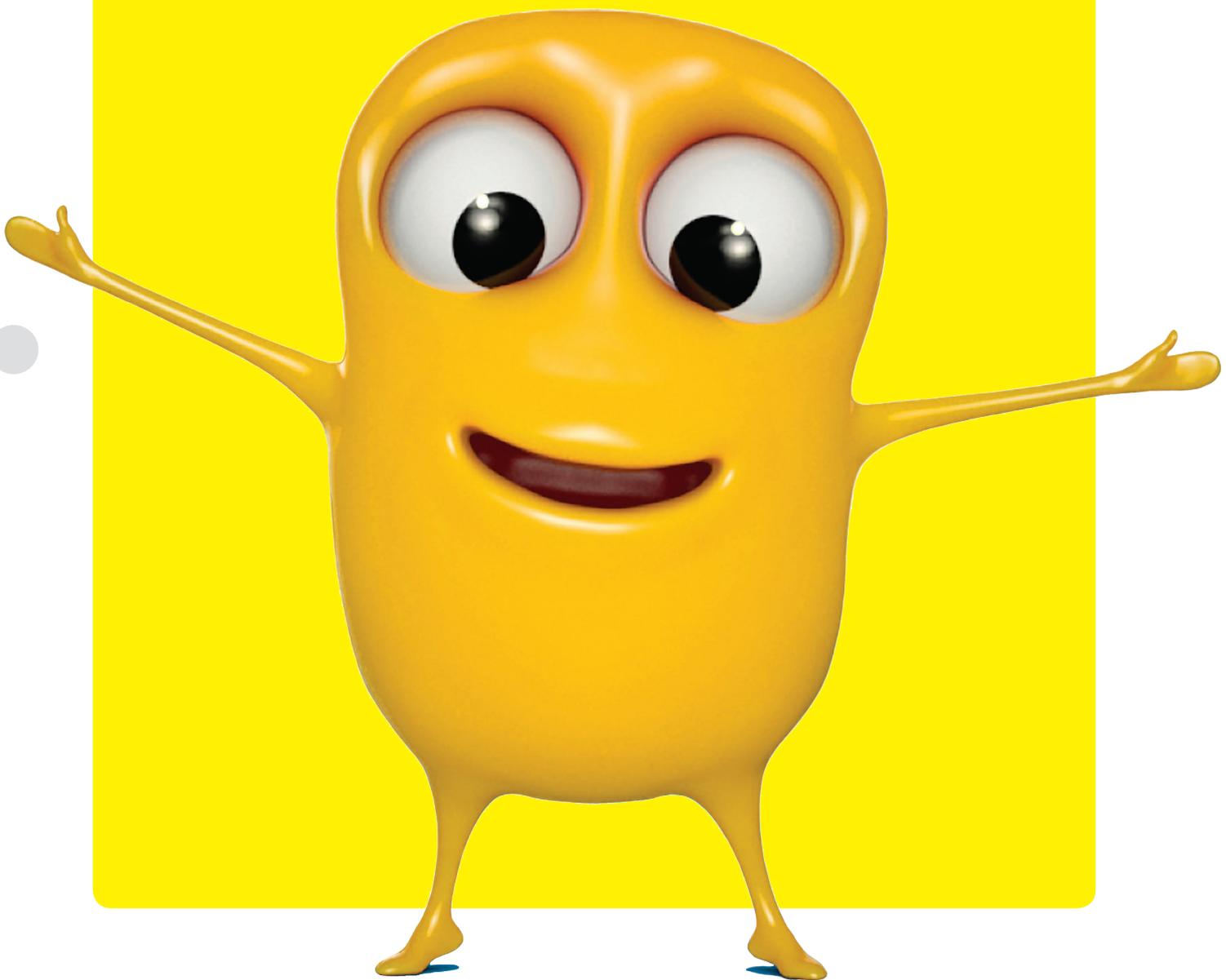**Macular Society**

# Tips for teaching literacy to visually impaired students

## Why adapt lessons for visually impaired (VI) students?

This 90-second video **youtu.be/O7j4_aP8dWA** demonstrates how much learning is visual and how much audio description is required to make content accessible.

With a few adaptations, VI students can participate fully, record their ideas and learn independently.

## General tips

- Always speak to students about what would best help them and how their needs might change over time. They are the experts of their own sight condition and can help you work out the best solution.

- Download **General tips for teaching visually impaired students** from

  **www.macularsociety.org/teaching**

  for introductory information including lighting; emotional support; formatting documents; assistive technology; techniques such as hand-over-hand guiding and further sources of information that have been used to create these resources.

**2**

# Strategies for adapting literacy lessons

## Touch and feel

VI students rely on other means of communication such as sound and touch. Teachers and support staff should use tactile means to help students overcome not being able to learn by sight.

- Set up raised dots to mark the start and finish of any document.

- Place tabs on book or document pages for chapter headings.

- Colour overlays can help make the printed documents and computer screens clearer.

- Ensure there is good contrast between text and background.

## In the classroom and exam hall

Using the other senses can place a huge demand on the VI student, so they may benefit from the following strategies.

- Allow more time for the student to process information.

- Apply for adjustments such as extra time and alternative methods of recording via your exam officer well in advance.

- Allow more time for comfort breaks to combat eye fatigue.

## Assistive technology

Assistive technology (AT) helps students to overcome learning barriers and have fully personalised and independent learning. Where possible and practical, they should be allowed to use their own laptop or mobile device, customised with relevant AT software. This will improve the student's learning and mean they can learn anywhere, anytime.

## Hardware

- A talking pen can be used with programmable dots to help students access worksheets.

## Software and online

- ReCiteMe is a cloud-based system that allows the user to customise the way a website appears in their browser, convert text to speech, or zoom any part of the screen.

- Use a computer's Ease of Access options to make icons bigger, change the icon toolbar to large, resize fonts and save default settings.

- Flipped classroom tools such as NearPod and Padlet allow all students to participate in real-time, irrespective of disability.

- Texthelp Read&Write is a toolbar that school networks can install to give students a range of options to display, hear and record text.

4

- Clarospeak produces a text-to-speech toolbar that works across all applications.

- Dragon Dictate Naturally Speaking allows the user to input speech into text and then have it read back to them.

- Most mobile phones now include voice-recognition and tools such as Siri and the Google Assistant.

- Mobile technologies (tablet computers and some laptops) allow students to pinch-to-zoom to expand information for clarity and position.

## Useful apps

- Book Creator (iOS/Android/PC) supports pinching to enlarge and move images.

- MD_evReader enlarges pre-loaded classic books and scrolls like a ticker tape across the screen for VI users.

- VBookz is a pdf text-to-speech reader.

- TapTapSee uses the camera to recognise objects and tell you what they are.

- VisionAssist uses the camera as a magnifier.

- BeMyEyes connects the user with a volunteer, and could be used discreetly by a support assistant in the classroom.

5

# In this series:

- **General tips** for teaching visually impaired (VI) students
- Tips for teaching **art** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **design technology** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **geography** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **history** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **ICT** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **literacy** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **mathematics** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **music** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **science** to VI students
- Tips for teaching **sport** to VI students
- Tips for VI students on **school trips**

**Macular Society**

**Macular Society**
PO Box 1870, Andover, SP10 9AD

01264 350 551
www.macularsociety.org

@MacularSociety

www.facebook.com/macularsociety